

STATE OF MARYLAND
MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT
Shari T. Wilson, Secretary

BILL NO: House Bill 221

COMMITTEE: Environmental Matters

POSITION: Oppose

TITLE: Bay Restoration Fund - Disbursement of Funds

BILL ANALYSIS: This bill would alter the allocation of the Bay Restoration Fund (BRF), which is collected from onsite sewage disposal system users. Under current law, 60 percent of the collected fees go to the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to upgrade onsite sewage disposal systems to the best available technology for removing nitrogen and 40 percent of the collected fees go to the Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) for implementing cover crop programs. If this bill is approved the proportion would change so that 40 percent of the collected fees would go towards upgrading onsite sewage disposal systems and 60 percent of the fees would go towards cover crops.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: MDE opposes House Bill 221. Upgrading OSDS to remove nitrogen is a key component of the Chesapeake Bay Tributary Strategy. While the Department is exploring all avenues to promote upgrading onsite sewage disposal systems, this Bill would eliminate funding sufficient to upgrade over 200 onsite sewage disposal systems per year resulting in an increase of 91,000 pounds of nitrogen that would be released into the environment over a five year period.

The Department recognizes the water quality benefits from implementing cover crop programs; however upgrading onsite sewage disposal systems is essential to achieving our water quality goals. The Bay restoration fund not only reduces nitrogen discharged from onsite systems but provides a public demonstration of implementing this best management practice. Demonstrating to the public the practicality of upgrading onsite sewage disposal systems overcomes an important obstacle to implementing the tributary Strategies and meeting the State's water quality standards.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT LISA NISSLEY
410-260-6301 ANNAPOLIS
410-537-3056 BALTIMORE